

Letter from Chicago

Winter 2009



Saturday February 7, 2009

Noon-3:00 pm

Parthenon Restaurant

314 S. Halsted, Chicago

(free valet parking)

“There were never such devoted sisters”

Marissa Love and Book Discussion

Sibling Relationships in
Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice,
Mansfield Park, and Persuasion

FEBRUARY 7 REGISTRATION FORM

Members: \$25; Guests: \$30

Registration deadline: February 2, 2009

Member Name _____

Guest(s) Name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____ Amount enclosed \$ _____

You can register by

1. Going online to www.jasnachicago.org and pay using your Visa or MasterCard.
- or
2. Mailing your check—payable to JASNA-GCR—and this form to Elsie Holzwarth, 1410 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615-5409.

Members

Martha Jameson

The Joän Pawelski Fund

JASNA President **Marsha Huff** reports an anonymous donor has contributed \$10,000 to JASNA in honor of Joän Pawelski, longtime member and leader of the Greater Chicago Region. Joän also served on JASNA's Board of Directors, and, as Editor of *JASNA News*, she instituted the newsletter format we enjoy today. Joän chose the theme for the successful 2008 AGM and led the Steering Committee in its first year of planning.

The Fund will provide a grant of \$1,000 a year to support future AGMs. At the closing brunch in Chicago, a check was presented to the 2009 Philadelphia AGM and accepted by Coordinator Elizabeth Steele. Additional contributions may be made by sending a check, payable to JASNA, to Membership Secretary Bobbie Gay, 7230 N. San Blas Drive, Tucson, AZ 85704. **Please indicate that the contribution is for the Joän Pawelski Fund.**

New Members

Susan Klovstad
Jeanne Steen

Contributors

Enid Golinkin
Jane Rishel

Spotted

In our last issue we reported a mysterious car spotted at L Woods restaurant in Lincolnwood with J Austen plates.

We have obtained a confession as follows: "It was not Miss Austen at L Woods, it was me, JASNA-GCR member **Joan Newhouse** and family, going out to dinner with some unexpected out of town guests just after the conference. All JASNA members who saw our car pull up at the Westin pointed and laughed whenever anyone spotted the plates. Other interesting features of the "Austenmobile," as my college age son calls it, are a dashboard Jane (the Jane Austen action figure attached with some museum putty) and a volume of "The Complete Jane Austen" (all six books in one), which comes in handy when waiting to pick people up, on long rides, or when dining out alone. Thanks for the laugh!"

LETTER FROM CHICAGO

Published by the Greater Chicago Region of the Jane Austen Society of North America

Natalie Goldberg, Regional Coordinator; Elsie Holzwarth, Editor; Kathleen Burke, Designer

Natalie Goldberg

Next October will find many of us in Philadelphia talking about “Jane Austen’s Brothers and Sisters in the City of Brotherly Love.” What a wonderful array of brothers and sisters Jane Austen depicts in her novels, drawn from observation and experience! Jane, after all, was one of eight children, and her closest friend was her sister Cassandra. Their father was disinherited by his grandfather in favor of his older brother.

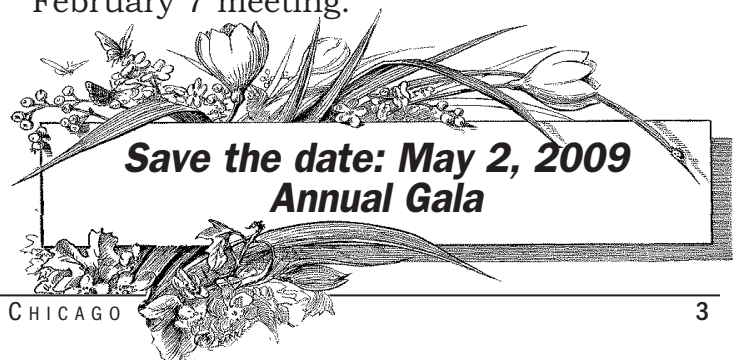
On February 7, we return to the Parthenon, a favorite venue for our book discussions, to focus on sibling relationships in four novels under the witty guidance of **Marissa Love**, who teaches humanities, literature and philosophy at the University of Chicago’s Graham School. (Marissa affirms that she has wanted to live at Pemberly since she was twelve, but has been unable to give up urban life!)

In explaining the theme of this meeting, Program Director **Elisabeth Lenckos** notes, “Sibling relationships are a source of endless interest in Austen’s novels.” She adds, “Given the harsh realities of primogeniture, siblings are often in competition for mates, parental attention, and economic resources. Yet siblings also work collectively, functioning as a single organism as they negotiate unwritten family rules. When siblings from different families come together, the plot takes off: competition increases, new rules are composed, and there is great excitement and uncertainty.”

The four novels we’ll be discussing have an array of competing siblings. With Elisabeth and Jane Bennet, *Pride and Prejudice* has the most admirable sisterly friendship, each the confidante of the other. The three younger Bennet sisters cause great embarrassment with the potential of leaving lasting damage, while two Bingley sisters and two Lucas sisters

show the problems of pride in Meryton’s marriage market. Interestingly, Darcy’s role as brother allows him to understand (and help) the wayward Lydia. *Sense and Sensibility* has three sets of siblings in the main plot frame: central, of course, are Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, but the Steele sisters parody the Dashwoods, and who can forget Fanny’s reasoning away all fraternal obligations her husband promised his dying father? The ironic opening paragraphs of *Mansfield Park* focus on the economic disparity caused by the marriage choices of three beautiful Ward sisters, perhaps as a cautionary tale, but the plot takes off when competing siblings Maria and Julia Bertram vie for the attentions of the sexy (and wealthy!) Henry Crawford, and his sister Mary captivates Fanny’s love, Edmund Bertram. Two sets of sisters in *Persuasion*, the Elliots and the Musgroves, are amusing in the ways they compete for love and attention. But my favorite sister for laughter is Mary Musgrove. Who can forget the one who insists on her right to have the worst headaches of all? There will be much to discuss!

Beverly Roth, our events planner, is arranging a theater outing. March 3rd through March 29, 2009, Milwaukee Rep will produce *Pride and Prejudice* with **Lee Stark** as Elisabeth Bennet. Lee, a guest of member **Anna Cooper-Stanton** at the Birthday Tea, is a young actress who won acclaim at Victory Gardens in the title role in *Eurydice*. We will post information on our website and have flyers ready for our February 7 meeting.



Young Writers Winners

The J. David Grey Young Writers' Workshop and the **Joan Austen-Leigh Prizes**, named for two JASNA founders, are a \$750 gift from JASNA to students who live in the region hosting the AGM. Each region is free to hold the workshop in the way most appropriate for the situation. Our plan was first suggested by **Joän Pawelski**, who asked me about 2 years ago, wouldn't it be great to invite high school students to a program during our AGM and have them listen to some of our wonderful speakers? Our region added an additional grant of \$500 to realize her vision.

On October 3, 29 students and their teachers came to the AGM to enjoy a day with Jane Austen. A scholar from our Opening Panel **Inger Brodey** (herself the recipient of two awards from JASNA writing competitions and a favorite speaker at past GCR Galas) had a conversation with students about our global Austen, focusing on the problems screenwriters and directors face in transforming Austen's narratives and ironic voice to the screen. With her guidance, students reflected about problems for casting and designing sets for an author who uses few descriptive clues and whose readers each visualize their own Elizabeth Bennets and Fitzwilliam Darcys. They considered methods directors choose to portray internal conflicts and complexities of character, and the ways they try to convey (or ignore) ironic shifts in judgment with visual clues.

Following this engaging exchange, students were invited to "hike" the Austen territory with our member and docent of the Chicago Architectural Foundation **Ronnie Jo Sokol**, a retired teacher from Evanston Township High School.

Students had maps and could follow the slides of the 5 to 9 mile round trip that Ronnie Jo and Austen herself made each day.

Ronnie Jo had students reflecting on the Hampshire settings that connect to Austen's life and the life of her characters.

A member of our Mystery Panel and a published author, **Carrie Bebris** also stopped by. Students discovered just how carefully novelists decide their titles, choose where to use dialogue and select their words. They learned that writing takes time and reflection—and research. Because she writes mysteries set in a historical period, Carrie must research into the times as new issues arise, and because she uses characters from Austen novels, she must reread again and again to see that her portrayals are consistent with behavior in the novels. For her newest mystery, *The Matters at Mansfield*, she had to learn how to fire 19th century dueling pistols. Most important, Carrie explained, is that writers communicate to an audience. One memorable anecdote she shared was receiving an email from a reader who was caring for his dying mother; he was able to forget his sorrow while he was reading her novel. She told students to go forth and write! They, too, can affect their audiences.

Students toured the first poster session and had the opportunity to speak with presenters; some loved the emporium and chose to try on the hats. Following lunch they were invited to write their own view of Austen's legacy. They had 2 options: they could take the voice of Jane Austen and write a letter to her legatees in 2008, or they could write an essay explaining what they discovered about her legacy. Students were told they must refer to one of Austen's novels specifically. But they could also refer to film adaptations, the 3 talks, and the exhibits they visited.

We hoped for authentic reflections on the personal or social or cultural legacy of Jane Austen. They had only 45 minutes to write. We found the young writers wrote well, took a

variety of approaches to the task, and reflected on the talks they heard earlier along with the judgments they brought to their reading of the novels. Students were touched by the passion of our presenters. One student explained about Ronnie Jo's hike along a path where Jane Austen walked: "To see the joy in her eyes and the passion in her voice was amazing. It is spectacular to know how Jane Austen could inspire so many people worldwide."



Nora Downs, Bethany Weathers and Sarah Daly.

Despite the short time given to the writing task, the committee had fine essays from which to select our 3 Joan Austen-Leigh-prize winners: **Sarah Daly**, **Nora Downs** and **Bethany Weathers**, all of whom attended the Sunday brunch. Members who joined me in judging the essays were **Lori Davis**, **Sandy Flannigan**, and **Luanne Redmond**.

Nora Downs explained what she discovered about Austen's legacy from the talks about directors' choices and writers' choices, and she applauded the versatility of Austen's characters. Nora concludes: "Jane Austen's legacy is everlasting because. . . most people can find part of themselves in a Darcy or an Elizabeth or even a Mr. Collins. Ultimately, at least for me, reading is a way to look at life through the conflicts and perspectives of fictional characters. Thus, Austen's legacy is supported by her fans, her students, and even her characters whom she created many years ago."

Sarah Daly wrote: "Characters such as Anne Elliot who suffer incredible inner struggles exist today. . . When I read the parlor scene where Anne is caring for her injured nephew and Captain Wentworth enters, I believe it because I can live it. . . Every reader can relate in some sense to what an Austen character feels." Sarah referred to Inger Brodey's presentation: "The lack of visual details given by Austen gives the reader full rights to build their own version of the character. . . each person who reads *Pride and Prejudice* can imagine his, or more likely her, own physical Darcy. In this sense, a reader's ability 'to create' the character allows the character to resound more solidly within a reader's memory and imagination. For instance, *my* Darcy is tall and dark haired."

Bethany Weathers effectively adopted Austen's voice. She has Austen write to "her dearest readers" that "so many years have passed since I first brought my pen and paper together, yet here they still survive." As Jane, she is proud of "the lessons that can be learned from my novels such as being strong of will and of voice as well as that of passions." Bethany's Austen advises us to "never, never, never find yourself conforming to those around you simply for convenience. Life is not convenient. . ." Adopting the kind of language someone from the 18th century might use, Bethany writes, "Again, dear reader, you must think of Ms. Elizabeth Bennet, who did not tolerate the ill actions of Mr. Darcy, who being very wicked, sent Mr. Bingley away, thus separating him from Ms. Jane Bennet. Our Lizzy was very sharp of tongue with Mr. Darcy, and after giving him quite a bashing, ended her tirade with 'you are the last man in the world I would marry.' Never before had Darcy felt so beaten."

Each of our Joan Austen-Leigh prize-winning students received a \$75 gift certificate to Borders Books and our congratulations for a job well done.

Birthday Tea

Austen and Vermeer

Thanks to the support of JASNA, we were the happy recipients of a fascinating talk by JASNA President **Marsha Huff** at our annual Jane Austen Birthday Tea, celebrating Austen's 233rd birthday. **William Phillips** was the Program Chair, **Beverly Roth** was in charge of arrangements, and **William Clark** gave the champagne birthday toast.

Marsha told us that in 1816 John Murray, the publisher of *Emma*, asked Sir Walter Scott to write a review for the *Quarterly Review*. Scott wrote: "The author's knowledge of the world, and the peculiar tact with which. . . characters that the reader cannot fail to recognize are presented, reminds us something of the merits of the Flemish school of painting."

Vermeer, born in 1632 in the Netherlands, "participated in an artistic revolution" because his paintings (of which we know 3 dozen) concern "characters in ordinary walks of life." Vermeer was buried on December 16, 1675, exactly one hundred years before Austen's birth. Austen too, in her concern with "common events", participated in "the birth of the modern novel." (Scott had criticized 18th century novels for "incredible plots and excessive sentiment", which Austen herself parodied in her juvenilia.)

Austen and Vermeer share a "communal vision" in that they show a "highly selective use of genteel trappings", an interest in psychology, a "moral dimension," women in domestic settings and a "balance in their work." Would that we could print here the paintings Marsha showed us. Vermeer's paintings may have been made with the aid of *camera obscura*, a device allowing light from an image to be projected onto a surface from which the image could be copied. Vermeer is known for his "extraordinary treatment of light" in his paintings; Austen for her "light and sparkling prose." Both present women as their main characters.

Marsha compared various Vermeer paintings to scenes in Austen's novels. In this she was

assisted by **Elisabeth** and **John Lenkocs'** beautiful readings of the scenes. Some of them were: the scene at Netherfield when Darcy is writing a letter to his sister and is interrupted by Caroline Bingley; Darcy, his cousin Colonel Fitzwilliam, and Elizabeth at Rosings when Darcy says to Elizabeth, "I am not afraid of you;" Maria Bertram, Henry Crawford and Fanny Price at Sotherton when Maria insists upon going around the iron gate; Wentworth's "You pierce my soul" letter which Anne reads at the White Hart.

Vermeer often painted women at keyboards or with string instruments. One painting with two women and a man performing reminds us of the concert at the Coles. Another painting, of a "seduction by musical performance," brings to mind Mary Crawford and her harp. They are "placed near a window" and the scene, Austen writes, "was enough to catch any man's heart." Vermeer's placement of his subjects near windows is his "trademark." In Mary's musical performance Austen, too, was "painting a picture", said Marsha, for she wrote, "even the sandwich tray, and Dr. Grant doing the honours of it, were worth looking at."

In one painting Vermeer inserts part of his easel. Austen inserts herself in the narrative of her novels, as in the end of *Mansfield Park* where she writes, "Let others dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, . . ." Another of Vermeer's paintings could be of Wickham and Georgiana Darcy, or Willoughby and Eliza. A pregnant woman balancing scales is portrayed in a "moral painting" by Vermeer as concerned with the question of "how to live a good life." She resembles Fanny "in her role as judge." Both Austen and Vermeer show us women reading and writing letters. Both allude to a backdrop of war: Vermeer in a map hanging on a wall; Austen in the militia of *Pride and Prejudice* and the Navy list read by the Musgroves. It is "balance and harmony; human culture and domestic order", however, for which Austen and Vermeer are known.

Tea Photos



John and Elisabeth Lenckos



Speaker Marsha Huff



William Phillips



Pat Wieber and Jeanne Steen



Warm figgy pudding and desserts



Natalie Goldberg and Linda Reinert



Martha Jameson



Anna Cooper Stanton and Lee Stark (Milwaukee's Elizabeth)



Liz Roob Ireland

Cassandra and Jane

Baroness **Jill Pitkeathley** was in the midst of a six-month stay in a cancer ward when she said to herself, “If not now, when?” During her treatment, Austen’s novels were familiar friends, so upon recovery, she set about to give new insights into Jane Austen’s character and offer her own answers to questions each Austen enthusiast eventually asks: “Was she ever in love? If so, with whom? Why did she never marry? Why did she accept a marriage proposal, only to reject it immediately afterward? Who WAS Eliza’s father? Why was Jane silent, writing nothing, for ten years?” As a trained counselor, Pitkeathley was equally intrigued by Jane Austen’s personality and relationships. Pitkeathley wished to answer: “Was Jane a difficult character? How did she behave within her family? Why did Cassandra destroy some of Jane’s letters?”

Once more in good health, Pitkeathley took up the task and, using her experience as a counselor, enhanced by imagination, cast light on Austen’s character through her relationships with others, especially Cassandra. Dedicating the resulting novel, *Cassandra and Jane*, to “my family and friends, who would not let me go,” Pitkeathley created an engaging and plausible story that answers each question in full—as well as fleshing out Cassandra’s jealous guarding of their relationship, Jane and Mrs. Austen’s mutual irritation, and which persons and events echo in the novels. Such is Pitkeathley’s skill that at no time did I doubt Jane’s life *could* have happened that way—not surprising for a first-time novelist whose “writing buddy” is Ruth Rendell.

Yet, because the work is fiction, its plausibility is the book’s chief weakness. While Stephanie Barron’s Jane stumbles upon corpses enough to overcrowd the Chawton graveyard to the point of a health risk, everything that happens to Pitkeathley’s

Jane and Cassandra could be real or imagined, and the author provides no means of discerning the difference. In the fictional autobiography *Just Jane*, Nancy Moser informs us at the end what is quotation or invention, fact or fiction. Pitkeathley provides no such help, and it’s help I crave!

True, “A little inaccuracy sometimes saves tons of explanation” (Saki), but I find it distracting to wonder if intriguing details really happened, such as Jane’s father handing her a copy of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. In finding well-known phrases from Jane’s correspondence, the reader might assume all the letters are Jane’s actual words, but they are not. The choicest bit of fiction (Jane’s seaside romance and clandestine correspondence with “Mr. Atkins,” the clergyman who dies before they can meet again “same time, next year”) is told in letters to Cassandra.

Of course, the more you learn of Austen’s real life from the biographies Pitkeathley suggests, the less you’ll confuse counterfeit details for the real. But in the meantime? For days after seeing *Amadeus* I thought Salieri caused Mozart’s death.

When Orville Vernon Burton, author of *The Age of Lincoln*, was bemoaning the fact that he could not include a wealth of primary sources in his book, I said, “That’s why God invented the Internet.” His answering smile told me he was already starting down that path. I invite Baroness Pitkeathley to follow Dr. Burton’s fine example by establishing a website that would allow her readers to tease out the strands of fact from the intricate strands of fiction, to get to know Cassandra and Jane Austen even better.

Errata: Anne’s friend Mrs. Lefroy is referred to as Tom’s mother, not his aunt. On the Vermont JASNA website, “Janeite Kelly” lists further errors I didn’t notice. www.janeausteninvermont.wordpress.com/2008/10/12cassandra-jane-a-review/

Cittings/Sightings

Elsie Holzwarth

Photos

AGM attendees had the pleasure of viewing a display of photos taken at our previous AGM in 1988. Those at the Tea saw a collection of photos of our 2008 AGM. Both were arranged by our long time archivist **Duwanna Wall** who preserves every morsel of material related to our activities. Our shutterbugs whose works were shown at the Tea are:

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Sandra Flannigan | Elsie Holzwarth |
| Margo Goia | Ronnie Jo Sokol |
| Natalie Goldberg | Vevia Martin |
| Renee Housel | |

We also note that, after a decade of hard work, **Margo Goia** is passing the national *JASNA News* production duties to our own able designer **Kathleen Burke** who will be working with new editor **Sheryl Craig**, as well as continuing with us.

New Fiction

Colleen McCullough (*The Thorn Birds*) was interviewed in the Brisbane, Australia *Courier-Mail* in connection with her new book, *The Independence of Miss Mary Bennet*. "I've never been a fan of Austen's. But I'd always wondered what happened to Mary. We're told there were 5 beautiful Bennet sisters and we're given a lot of information about them, except for Mary. She's only really known for having a terrible singing voice." The article calls the book "an amusing romp in Austenland which finds Mary a disenchanted spinster determined to do something purposeful with her life after spending 20 years looking after Mrs. Bennet." But the Darcys' marriage is less than happy. Says McCullough, "It was obvious to me that Lizzie, like many young women, thought she could reform Mr. Darcy, that a good woman could change a man. I've been around the block a few times and know a leopard's spots are there for good."

Chicago author **Julie James'** first novel was reviewed in the *Chicago Sun-Times*. In *Just*

the Sexiest Man Alive a female employment lawyer crosses paths with a big-time movie star. "Their relationship turns unto a tug-of-war of will-they-or-won't-they get together. . . Witty banter and amazing chemistry. . .bring this delightful story to life." James' next novel *Practice Makes Perfect* is due for a spring release. Austen is her favorite author, and "she admits her first two books have a few *Pride and Prejudice* themes."

"If Austen Wrote E-Mail" was the headline of the crime column in *The NY Times Book Review*. "Deploying a leisurely-paced epistolary style and a busy plot stuffed with dodgy inheritances, romantic mismatches and bountiful afternoon teas. . . **Reginald Hill** in *The Price of Butcher's Meat* pulls off the clever literary jest of projecting Austen's unfinished novel '*Sanditon*' into modern times. . . Hill proves brilliant at recycling 19th century characters and conventions—the gargoyle mistress of the manor, the feckless young heir, the penniless live-in relation, the family done out of its just inheritance—while gleefully adding macabre genre touches like a hog roast at which the pig is replaced by a dead body."



Baseball

An article in *The Telegraph Online* declares "Austen wrote about baseball 40 years before its official invention." In *Northanger Abbey* Austen wrote, "It was not very wonderful that Catherine, who had nothing heroic about her, should prefer cricket, base ball, riding on horseback, and running about the country at the age of fourteen, to books." **Julian Norridge**, author of *Can We Have Our Balls Back*, says, "There's no doubt it was being played in Britain in the late 18th century, and equally no doubt that it travelled to America." A German book from 1796 had 7 pages devoted to the rules of "englischer Baseball." May we see Austen enshrined in the Hall of Fame at Cooperstown!

GCR Quilt

Yes, gentle Reader, your correspondent was under GCR's "Jane Austen quilt." Actually, pen and paper in hand, she was copying down the names embroidered on the underside. The quilt was spread across several chairs, on display in the Emporium at the AGM. She heard commentary above, comparing it with the original worked on by Austen and now at Jane Austen's House Museum at Chawton. Upon surfacing, she encountered **Louise West**, collections manager at the Museum, who lives in Alton, a frequent destination of Austen's walks. Louise remarked that she sees the original every day. While seated at the Museum table, she spied the GCR quilt across the room and was intrigued. Perhaps replicas could be sold at the Museum, she thought. She was delighted to discover our region had made the quilt and proclaimed it, "a beautiful, faithful reproduction."

Luanne Redmond, one of our GCR quilters, reminisced, "I well remember the piecing and quilting, especially during the summer and early fall of 1988. Working in the quilt gallery [Wild Goose Chase Quilt Gallery], which was filled with antiques and art, we had the feeling we were making history of our own. I went to the quilt gallery almost daily for several months, accompanied by my first child (who learned to crawl during that time, making the sewing sessions considerably more complicated) and sometimes by my nine-year-old stepdaughter Maya, who had just learned to sew and did her first embroidery when she put her name on the back of the quilt. Good times!"

Our quilt is 20 years old and has been displayed at both our 1988 and 2008 AGMS. Austen's (more correctly called a coverlet) is



Louise West and Annette Engelhardt.

at least 197. On May 31, 1811 Austen wrote from Chawton to Cassandra at their brother Edward's, at Godmersham Park, "Have you remembered to collect peices (*sic*) for the Patchwork?—We are now at a stand still" (Letter No. 74, *Jane Austen's Letters*, **Deidre Le Faye**, ed.) The first edition of Le Faye's enlargement and revision of *Jane Austen: A Family Record* by **William Austen-Leigh** and **Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh** has an image of the Austen coverlet on the cover.

Luanne explained that "Jane Austen, Cassandra and Mrs. Austen made a coverlet, without filling or quilting, but the JASNA recreation was a quilt." Our quilters' names embroidered on the back are:

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Karen Frederickson | Marilyn Packer |
| Patricia Latkin | Luanne Redmond |
| Didier Arpino | Maya Redmond |
| Maggie Cantrall | Carol Sheldon |
| Kathleen Goetz | Linda White |
| Diane Holden | |

Karen and Pat wrote an article in *Persuasions*, vol.13, pgs.41–48, on how to construct a reproduction of Austen's coverlet. They also related the observations

of **Margarete** (“Maggie”) **Cantrall** based on her visit to Chawton and her research on the original coverlet.

Luanne alerted us to **Pamela D. Toler’s** article in the September/October issue of *Piecework* magazine which contains photos of Austen’s coverlet and mentions our quilt in a sidebar. “The Austen coverlet,” writes Toler, “one of the few examples of Jane Austen’s needlework, is a variation on the English medallion style, in which a central motif cut from a single piece of chintz is surrounded by multiple borders. Such quilts were often called ‘one-yard quilts’ because chintz, imported from India and heavily regulated, was very expensive. Women could seldom afford more than a yard or two (0.9 to 2 m) of a favorite pattern; even the wealthy looked for ways to use the costly fabric more economically. One solution was to cut out motifs from chintz and combine them with less expensive fabrics. By the late eighteenth century, English manufacturers had begun producing their own chintz patterns, including fabrics designed specifically for use in appliqué or patchwork quilts. Printed fabrics of this type represented British fabric printing at its most elaborate, often requiring a dozen or more woodblocks to produce a single medallion. Printed centerpieces were a common feature of British patchwork from 1800 to 1815, when roller printing began to replace the use of woodblocks, and patterns were simplified due to the limitations of roller printing.

In the Austen coverlet, diagonal rows of more than 200 lozenges (diamond-shaped pieces) surround the central medallion, itself cut into a diamond shape around a printed basket of flowers. The lozenges are set in a trellis pieced from rhomboids made from a fabric that is cream spotted with black. A deep border of more than 2,000 tiny lozenges, one-ninth the size of those surrounding the central medallion, edges the coverlet. [The

border of our quilt is not as wide and the diamonds in it are not as small, explained Louise as she carefully inspected it.] Each patch, large and small, has been cut to display the fabric’s motif to best advantage.

Using a piecing technique common in the period, the Austen women basted each fabric piece over a paper template, then removed the papers when the piecing was complete. Sometimes referred to as the ‘Jane Austen quilt,’ the piece is more correctly called a coverlet as the pieced top is attached to its cotton backing only at the edges. Having no lining, the coverlet probably was intended for decoration rather than warmth.

The Austens used sixty-four different fabrics in the coverlet, most of them in the small diamond patches of the border. The central motif was cut from a piece of chintz drapery fabric. The smaller patches are of calico and probably came from dressmaking scraps and worn-out clothing. . . . Collecting the necessary fabric pieces must have been part of the challenge of creating the coverlet.”

Things are easier today. **Barbara Brackman** has introduced her Hartfield Collection of fabrics for quilt making which “reproduces early prints from the years when Jane Austen flourished.” The prints are named Hartfield, Pemberley, Allenham Court, Netherfield Park, Donwell Abbey, Meryton, Longbourne, Mansfield Park and Lucas Lodge. “Colorways echoing the natural dyes of the time” are called Lizzie’s Rose Pink, Marianne’s Plum, Darcy’s Biscuit Tan, Emma’s Hedge Green and Knightley’s Umber Brown.

Check out the patterns and colors at:
www.barbarabrackman.com

The museum in Chawton is at:
www.jane-austens-house-museum.org.uk

The *Persuasions* article is at:
www.jasna.org/persuasions/printed/number13/frederickson_latkin.htm

LETTER FROM CHICAGO
JASNA-GCR
Elsie G. Holzwarth
1410 East 55th Street
Chicago, IL 60615-5409

Saturday, February 7
Lunch

Calendar

A healthy and happy 2009 to all.

February 7, 2009

Lunch, Marissa Love “There were never such devoted sisters” and book discussion on sibling relationships in *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*.
The Parthenon Restaurant, 314 S. Halsted St., Chicago, IL
noon to 3:00 pm (free valet parking)

May 2, 2009

Annual GALA, “Jane Austen and Beauty”
Allerton Hotel, 701 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL
Continental Breakfast and Lunch

Our website is www.jasnachicago.org